

*The Covenants of Works and Grace, — God's
writing his Law in the Hearts of his People,
— and engaging to be their God.*

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Explained in a

Sam 95

S E R M O N

O N

JEREMIAH xxxi. 33.

P R E A C H E D

In Cannon-Street, BIRMINGHAM,
November 11, 1770.

By JAMES TURNER. *K*

Published at the Request of Friends.

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The Covenant of Works and Grace — 321
 reviving his Love in the Hearts of his People
 — and engaging to be their God.

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PREACHED

In Cannon-Street Church, MINORHAM.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE publication of this discourse is entirely owing to the request of friends, I not having the most distant thought of it. They were pleased to tell me, it was useful and acceptable to them in bearing of it, and they were in hopes it might (through the blessing of God) be useful to others. How far they and I have shewn our judgment and prudence, in the affair, shall be left undetermined here. The manner in which it is executed stands in need of apologies I own; but I shall make none for the matter of it. It comes into your hands, Reader, accompanied with my earnest prayers, that it may be of service to your soul; if you are bettered, and God honoured, I am pleased and rewarded. It contains what I call Truth, and what I preach and esteem. I have endeavoured to keep clear of Arminianism on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other; being persuaded that they are dangerous extremes, and damnable heresies! I have laboured to do justice, both to law and gospel; works and grace: I have indeed been somewhat particular, in proving the law to be the believer's Rule of Life; I meant to be so, and deserve to have my mouth stopped for ever, if I did not believe and teach that great point. The leading article of revelation

lation is, that sovereign grace is at once the efficient cause of our salvation, and of a holy conversation. Under the influence of this important doctrine, I desire to preach and pray, to live and die.

The reader, who was a hearer, will find some small variation in the mode of expression, tho' the general plan, and the substance of the sermon, are the same. It is plain, but I hope it is pure; truth is better than elegance; we may be misled by the latter, but never by the former. The candid reader will excuse inaccuracies, and I do not make my apologies to any other.

I give my sincere thanks to my friends who were kind enough to solicit this publication, assuring them, that (next to my own salvation) I wish to be the happy instrument of their present comfort and future happiness; and have only to add my prayers to the Lord, that pure religion, in all its branches, may flourish; that the believer may shew his faith by his works, and all who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity. In a word, while we live upon that grace which came by Jesus Christ, we may walk according to that law which was given by Moses.

I commend this discourse, and the reader, to the blessing of God, And am, &c.

Cannon-Street,
Nov. 22, 1770.

J. T.

S E R M O N.

J E R E M I A H xxxi. 33.

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

EVERY opposition to the Gospel is a stroke aimed at the root and foundation of salvation; and every opposition to the Law, is a stroke aimed at the foundation of morality and all practical religion. 'Tis a happiness, never enough to be valued, to know the truth, or to have a right judgment of the whole word of God. In what does religion consist, but in a sound judgment, a gracious heart, and a good life? or, to express the same idea in other words, it consists in a clear perception of the truths of the Bible, an heart-felt experience of their sweetness and power, and in a holy and

and exemplary conduct in every part of life. A man may have orthodox notions, and bad practices; may be a sound believer, and a sinful liver (*i. e.* may believe doctrines that are *sound* and good, and at the same time live a bad life): So on the other hand, a man may live a decent life, and yet be a very infidel as to his belief. It is therefore the duty and work of Ministers to instruct men in the nature and tendency, glory and utility, of the truths and things of God: They should lay before them the nature of the two covenants of *works* and *grace*; and endeavour to set them right in all matters of faith and practice. The word of God is very explicit on these points; and it should be the study and pleasure of the Lord's servants, to lead their people to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, so far as their abilities admit.

The words of our text have respect to the covenant of grace, which the Lord said he would make with the House of *Israel**, &c. or *make known* to the House of *Israel*, as it may be read. This covenant is of a different nature from that made with the fa-

* The Reader will observe, that I have all the way through this discourse applied the phrase, *House of Israel*, in the text, to *Abraham's spiritual Seed*; who are said to be *Christ's*, and heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 29. And who are elsewhere called, *The Israel of God*, — *God's elect*, — *The Sheep and Spouse of Christ*, and by various other names of like import.

thers of *Israel*, as the context shews. In this, God engages to write his law in their hearts, to be their God, and they to be his people. There were reasons of the highest moment why the Lord would and did make known another covenant to his people; and his doing so will be to his own honour and their happiness for ever. Wo be to sinners had not this been the case! Glory to God for this covenant, and the provision made in it for ruined creatures! Here our salvation took its rise—here the glorious preparation was made to bring the chosen of the Lord to glory and happiness!

In discoursing farther on these words, we shall,

I. Briefly describe the nature of the two covenants of *works* and *grace*;—shew wherein they agree with, and wherein they differ from, each other.

II. Shew also what is meant by God's putting his law in the inward parts of his people, and writing it in their hearts; and

III. Endeavour to give the sense of the phrase which concludes our text; in which the Lord declares to *Israel*, that *he will be their God, and they shall be his people.*

This done, a few remarks shall conclude the whole.—Then we are,

I Briefly to describe the nature of the two covenants of *works* and *grace*;—shew wherein they agree with, and wherein they differ from, each other;

The covenant of works, or the law, was first given to *Adam* for the rule and trial of his obedience. It was afterwards given to *Israel* by *Moses*, on Mount *Sinai*, on two tables of stone. Its contents are precepts, promises, and penalties. It required perfect obedience; promised life on that condition, and threatened death in case of failure. It is a noble description of God's moral perfections; and considers all men as the subjects of his government; And tho' it requires nothing but what is perfectly reasonable, it cannot dispense with the least violation or breach.

It is called, by way of distinction, the *old* covenant; and that of grace is called, the *new* covenant. This distinction respects not the dates of their being made, but the dates of their promulgation. In this sense the law took the lead, or was first made known to man: But even here the gospel was not long behind the law. The first took date at man's creation, the other at his fall. In their original constitution, in the

the divine councils, their dates were the same. The decrees of God were eternal. *First* and *second*, *old* and *new*, are terms we use in reference to the succession and order of things as they appear to us. Farther, The law speaks of God as a being of perfect rectitude, justice, goodness and truth. And at the same time requires truth in the inward parts; and that man should love his Maker and Lord with all his heart and soul, and strength. The covenant of grace is what the name given it fitly describes—it is all grace. It contains all our salvation, and all that we can desire. In it, and through it, God appears and acts in the most lovely character of *the God of all GRACE*. The Mediator of it is full of grace as well as truth.

But our next business is to shew in what respects these two covenants agree. And

1. They are both of God. They owe their existence (so to speak) to the same Author. Hence the law is called, *The law of God*,—*The law of the Lord*,—*Thy law*,—*My law*, &c. 'Tis the mind and will of God revealed to man, as the rule of his obedience. And I would be the more careful to have this understood, inasmuch as

* Psal. xxxvii. 31. b i. 2. c xciv. 12. d lxxxix. 30.

there is ground to fear that some entertain very slighty and loose notions of the law, regarding it, and speaking of it, as if it was the law of a *Mogul*, a *Turk*, or a *Tyrant*. Hence we read of some, *who desire to be teachers of the law, and know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm*. Ignorance is here given as the reason of their unjust and extravagant positions and affirmations. I wish the case may not be found otherwise with some — that they endeavour to invalidate the law from a kind of libertine enmity against it. — But then, the covenant of grace too is from God. In *Psal. lxxxix. 1*, he says, *I have made a covenant with my Chosen*, &c., *i. e.* with Christ; and it is twice more in the same Psalm called *his covenant*. But it is needless to enlarge here.

2. *These covenants were both given for the good of men.* There is nothing in either of them but what is perfect and profitable. The law is holy, just and good: It is of great use to shew men their duty; to point out to them what is right and what is wrong. It requires nothing but what is reasonable and profitable, and it forbids nothing but what is hateful and hurtful. The Apostle says, *We know the law is good if a man use it lawfully*, 1 Tim. i. 8. When then may a man

be said to use it lawfully? 1. Not when he makes obedience to it *the condition* of a sinner's acceptance with God. 2. Nor when he denies it to be *the rule* of the believer's life. Whoever holds either of these notions, makes an unlawful use of the law, and is an enemy to God. I have an extreme aversion to *both* these notions, and wish to be the happy instrument of preserving you, my brethren, from them. Is there no use for the law but to justify us before God? or must we make no use of it at all? Is not this to *abuse* the law? to misplace and wrong apply it? to refer it to purposes for which the blessed God never designed it? certainly it is. To use it lawfully then, is to speak well of it; to study it with awe and reverence; to shew of what use it is to convince the sinner of sin, and of his lost condition; and though the sinner cannot keep it, no failure is to be laid to the law's charge, nor any abatement made in its demands. Again,

It is lawfully used, when it is regarded by the believer as the only rule of his obedience. A godly man loves the law and the gospel, and sees an absolute necessity for both. The gospel points out to him the way of salvation — the law his manner of conversation. The one shews him the way to believe, and the other the way to live.

What

What must I do to be saved? and *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* are questions of the greatest moment; the former of which is answered by the gospel, and the latter by the law. Or, in other words, Jesus, as Saviour and Sovereign, resolves them both. The good man goes to the law and to the testimony, and takes the whole word of God as the ground of his faith, and guide of his life: *He meditates in the law of God day and night; he delights in it after the inward man.* Blessed experience has taught him, that *in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.* I am fully persuaded that they who love the gospel most, love the law most; they who are no friends to grace, are none to works; nor are they any friends to works, that are not friends to grace also. Let it therefore remain as an everlasting truth on our hearts, that the noblest advocates for free grace, are the noblest advocates for good works. Again,

3. The two covenants agree in this also: There was to each a Mediator; *Moses* to the one, and *Jesus* to the other. *The law was ordained by Angels in the hands of a Mediator,* Gal. iii. 19. and we are told, *that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the man Christ Jesus,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. Yet the mediation of the Law-giver, differed

differed greatly from that of the Saviour: He indeed spoke to God for the people, and to the people for God; but then he was not responsible for their sins, though he brought and taught them the law, and made intercession for them. Christ became surety in the covenant of grace; he acted as a principal in behalf of his people. He was set up from everlasting as their Covenant-head and Representative—agreed to take their nature, and to stand accountable to God for their guilt. He knew how to lay his hands on both parties as a good *day's-man*, and to bring about a reconciliation between the offended and the offending.

Once more, There is another point in which these covenant agree; and that is, *they are both perpetual and everlasting*. The law can never be annulled or made void. Its penalties or curses will be executed on the wicked for ever, and the godly will be under it as a rule of life for ever. I don't say we shall want a *written* revelation in Heaven, but I believe we shall know much more of, and delight much more in it, *there* than *here*.

Besides, If the law be the will of God, that we should obey him, this will *always* be his will; nor would it be possible that we should obey him even in Heaven without a rule;—and what rule should this be

but his *law*? Love to God and our fellow creatures are the grand contents of the law; and in glory the saints will exercise this love in the most perfect manner. Again,

The covenant of grace will always continue; it is *ordered in all things and sure*^f; and the Lord says, *my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips*^g. It is ratified by the promise and oath of the Father, and by the death and blood of the Son. Herein consists the safety of the saints. Could God change or break his covenant they might perish; *but he is the Lord and changeth not, therefore they are not consumed*^h. In a word, were the law abrogated as a covenant of works, and as a rule of life, there would be no punishment for the sinner; nor duty, obedience, or disobedience in the believer. And we may add, if the covenant of grace were broken, there could be no salvation for any.

Let us bless God then for a covenant, on the unchangeableness of which he has pledged his veracity and honour, and on the same principle secured his people for ever. But as notice will be taken of these things, when we are a little farther advanced in this discourse, for the present we dismiss them, and proceed,

f 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. g Psal. lxxxix. 34 h Mal. iii. 6.

To shew wherein these covenants differ. And

1. That of works is made up of precepts, injunctions, and commands. It points out to man his duty to God and his neighbour; and in case of failure, it threatens punishment, as we have seen above. It is a perfect law, and was at first given to a perfect creature. It is true, man by sin has lost his power to obey, but the law's authority to command is perpetually the same. Those who assert that the law is relaxed, and made milder, would do well to shew us wherein, and how far, this was done. He that spake, as never man spake, has assured us, *That he came not to destroy the law,—and that Heaven and earth may pass, but one jot or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law*¹. Now the covenant of grace is made up of declarations and promises. It is no improper expression to call it, a *Magazine of mercies*. It does not call the sinner to duty, and threaten him with damnation in case of disobedience; but it calls the needy, the weary and heavy laden to peace, rest, liberty and happiness.

2. These covenants differ in this particular,—that of works makes no provision for so much as *one* of *Adam's* ruined race. The law is indeed excellently adapted to all

¹ Matt. v. 17, 18.

the purposes of good government and good conduct: It also shews sinners their state by nature, and very awfully ascertains their deserts as transgressors, but provides them no relief. The sinner may cry for help, and die without receiving it from the law: *What the law could not do, in that it was weak thro' the flesh*, (saith the Apostle) *God sent his own Son, &c.*^k. Now the law is not weak in vindicating the innocent, or condemning the guilty; but its want of ability is seen in salvation matters. It can by no means clear the guilty: "Pay me that thou owest," is its language to every offender. *It curses every one that continueth not in all things written in it to do them*^l. If we ask, What is our duty to God or our neighbour? the law can answer us: but if we ask, What we must do to be saved? it has nothing to say to us. *By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight*^m; by it is the knowledge of sin, but not of a Saviour.

The question then is, Where is salvation to be had?—and the answer is, In the covenant of grace. In this great and early transaction, the three persons in the Holy Trinity agreed upon every circumstance necessary to the salvation of sinners. Very justly therefore is this covenant said to be

^k Rom. viii. 3. ^l Gal. iii. 10. ^m Rom. iii. 20.

ordered in all things and sure. The blessed Saviour acted on the part of sinners; he engaged to come into the world, obey, and die in their name and nature. In the ancient act of election, the relation between Christ and his people was constituted; and in the covenant of redemption he appears, and acts, as their kinsman and surety. In a word, the provision made in the covenant of grace is such, as lays the most solid foundation for the Christian's faith, love, and joy; *here, my brethren, is all our salvation, and all our desire.*

Permit me, in a word or two more, just to observe,—That though the law cannot justify—that we are not saved in whole or part by the deeds of it—yet it sustains no injury, or loss, through the salvation which is by grace. Paul puts these important questions: *Do we make void the law through faith? Is the law against the promises of God?* As if he had said, Do the law and the gospel clash, contradict and thwart each other? Do they act like the builders of *Babel*, one build up and the other pull down? God forbid! On the contrary, he assures us, *That if there had been a law given, that could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by it.*

Suppose a felon is condemned, and brought

* Rom. iii. 31. ^a Gal. iii. 21.

to the place of execution, and, at the moment when he is going to be turned off, a pardon should arrive from his prince; how astonishing would be the mercy! and yet the law of the land not injured. In like manner, when God shews mercy, the law is not injured. Indeed this cannot be, since Christ has satisfied justice for every soul that is pardoned and saved.

One thing more we shall mention, wherein these covenants differ; and that is, the one is *broken*, and the other is not, nor indeed can be. The covenant of works was broken almost as soon as given; it is too true (so to speak) that all men have broken it: *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*! Where is the son or daughter of *Adam* to be found that has not broken the law? Not one in Heaven, earth, or hell! but blessed be God, the covenant of grace can never be broken. In the verses before our text, the Lord said, *I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah; not according to that which I made with their fathers, (which my covenant they brake, &c.)* No, (to speak after the manner of man) God would take care to make one which they never should have it in their power to break. And in chap. xxxiii. 20. God says, *If you*

• Rom. iii. 23.

can

can break my covenant with day and night, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, i. e. Christ. This then is the better covenant, established on better promises, of which, in Heb. viii. 6. Paul speaks. These promises are not conditional—they respect the poor sinner's *state*, and not his *works*. In a word, they respect what God is to do, or will do, for his people; and he never will deceive them: *My covenant will I not break*, is the language of his blessed gospel. O what comfort—what confirmation is here for every soul that sees his need of salvation! Finally, the case stands thus: If it ever had been in our power, to break the covenant of grace, we should have done it; but it was made with Christ, the Lord from Heaven, and who never sinned; whereas the covenant of works was made with man who soon sinned, and we in him. I grant, indeed, that the law remains pure, though it is broken; but then man is undone: and if the covenant of grace could be broken, we should be ruined for ever. I shall conclude this head with *Psal. cxi. 9. He sent redemption to his people, he commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his name.*

II. We

III. We are to shew what is meant by the Lord's putting his law into the inward parts of his people, and writing it in their hearts.

Possibly respect may be had to the whole word of God, as the term *law* is often there used in this sense. The expression implies, that prior to this act of the Lord's, the law was not there; neither law nor gospel has any place (in this sense) in the hearts of sinners by nature. Hence we read, *That the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* For though all men may be said to have some knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil, as the *Heathens*, who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, &c. Yet I think, this rather expresses their knowledge of it, than love to it; and is a conclusion to be drawn, not from their *conscience*, but their *rationality*: A moral agent (which man undoubtedly is) cannot be without some sense of good and evil, *as it is written*

But my design is to confine the improvement of this head chiefly to the *moral law*. This law was originally written on tables of stone, to which the phrase here used, may refer; and I would observe, that the *heart* is the very seat and centre of true religion.—A few refined speculations float-

p Rom. viii. 7.

q Rom. ii. 15.

ing in the head, or some appearances of morality in the life, enter but a little way into the true spirit of religion. Nothing short of an application of the word to the heart, and an experience of its power and sweetness, can stand its ground, and be of use another day. The phrase in the text assures us, that God *himself* will write his law in the hearts of his people; he will trust the business with no other, were they, as they are not, capable of it. It is God's own act, and an instance of his grace and goodness to his *Israel*. Moreover, he *will* do it—and when the Lord declares, he will do this, or that, we may depend on his word; he is God, and not man, and therefore cannot repent or change. The *will* of God is the grand *hinge*, or *axis*, on which all his operations in grace and providence turn. Now then, the question is, What is meant by God's putting or writing his law in his people's hearts? And no doubt the meaning is this: namely, his impressing the heart with a sense of it; bowing the will to its authority, and exciting the affections to love it. The heart, which by nature is hard as adamant, is made soft by grace, and susceptible of these impressions: *It is turned as clay to the seal*; (to borrow a phrase from the book of *Job*) or, as wax made soft re-

ceives the signature! In short, the law
 written in the heart, is the true copy, coun-
 ter part, or duplicate, of the law as it stands
 in the word of God. And now, its being
 in the heart, must mean the love the Lord
 creates in his people to it! So when Paul
 expressed his sincere love to the Philippians;
 he said, *because I have you in my heart*; as
 much as to say, I love you greatly—I love
 you exceedingly! In like manner, the be-
 liever loves the law—he loves it in his very
 heart! Hence David says, *The law of thy
 mouth is better to me, than thousands of gold
 and silver*, Psal. cxix. 72. And again, ver.
 97. *O how love I thy law!* and Paul, could
 say, *I delight in the law of God after the in-
 ward man*, Rom. vii. 22. In the love of
 these eminent saints, there was, no doubt,
 some imperfection; and so there is in every
 act of the Christian while on earth, whether
 external or internal. Jesus only could say,
 in the perfect sense of the expression, *Thy
 law is within my heart*, Psal. xl. 8. Yet the
 believer loves and reveres the law; and al-
 though he is convinced there is no justifica-
 tion by the deeds of it; no acceptance with
 God on the foot of it; (being very well as-
 sured that this is by the righteousness of
 Christ alone) yet he considers his obligati-

ent to God and his law, not hereby lessened but strengthened. But there is another question to be asked, and answered; and that is, Does the writing of the law in the heart, annul, or set aside, the believer's obligations to it, as a RULE OF LIFE? Suppose we grant it does. What would be the consequences? Why in short, that idolatry, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, covetousness, &c. are no sins. Dreadful doctrine indeed! And yet, if the law

One would really think it impossible that any man, who hath read and studied the Bible, should be so *daring* as to affirm, or so *credulous* as to believe, that the Christian has nothing to do with the law; but alas! orthodoxy in faith, (as well as purity in life) is become a rare thing in these days of degeneracy and corruption. The man who denies salvation by grace, — and he who denies that believers have any thing to do with the law, put together, make a complete, and a confirmed Deist. The one disowns the gospel, the other the law; and so adieu religion for ever! We cry out against *papery*, *superstition*, *idolatry*, *schism*, &c. (indeed we have reason so to do) but let me ask, Whether there is any species of heterodoxy, or irreligion, more *daring*, or more *dangerous*, than to deny salvation by grace; or to deny the law to be a rule of life? If one of the former opinion, should tell me he is a friend to the *gospel*; or one of the latter, that he is a friend to *virtue* and *morality*; I should think it no more eligible to believe him, than if an adherent of the *Pretender's*, should tell me, he was a friend to the *Hanover* Family, and the succession of the Crown in the Protestant Line. The best religion in the world, is to trust in Christ for a whole salvation; and to walk according to his law in our conversation. Did I say the best religion? 'Tis the only one that deserves to be called *good*. This will stand the trial, and prove genuine and current; when Heaven and Earth shall pass away, and the duration we call *Time*, shall be no more.

is not the rule of the believer's walk, this must be granted: *For where no law is, there is no transgression*. Take away the law, as a rule of action, and the Christian would be like the *Idol-gods*, that could neither do good nor evil. We readily grant that the believer is dead to it, and delivered from it, as a covenant. Were we under it in this sense, we should be under the *curse*; but *Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*".

But it may be said, *The law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless, disobedient, &c.* as in 1 Tim. i. 9. To which I answer, the *threatening*, or *penal* part of the law, was not made for a righteous man: we have laws in our nation against *theft*, *burglary*, *murder*, &c. but these belong not to the innocent, or guiltless; they were not made for them, but for the wicked, the abandoned, and prophane. But some who deny the law to be the believer's rule of life, do yet give out that they are enemies to vice, and friends to obedience. They pretend to know, that the believer *will* live to God—that he is under (what they term) the *law of love*, &c. Accordingly, we find many who are avowed enemies to the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel; who

t Rom. iv. 15.

u Gal. iii. 13.

yet

yet pretend to be friends of Christ, and talke of something they call the *gospel*, *the grace and mercy of God*; when, alas! it is only an *ideal*, or *imaginary gospel*; 'tis another *gospel*, which is *not a gospel*. In like manner, they who have discarded the law, as a rule of life, notwithstanding their pretences to obedience, and the *law of love*, have invented another law, which is *not another*.

There are three things absolutely necessary to obedience, or the performance of good works: a good *principle*;—a good *rule*;—and a good *end*. Now what are these, but *love to God*;—the *law of God*;—and the *glory of God*? Suppose any one of these be wanting, no man can perform a good work to all eternity. Away then with all imaginary gospels, and imaginary laws. Let us bless God for our Bibles, and bear a steady testimony against all *legal*, and all *licentious* principles. Let us not add to, or diminish from the whole word of God; but *esteem it concerning all things to be right, and hate every false way*. Hath not our blessed Lord taught those that love him, to keep his commandments? and which be they, but those that are written in the Bible? He hath assured us also, *That whosoever breaks the least of these, and teacheth*
men

*himself, shall be called the least in the kingdom of
 Heaven.* What cause of grief and mourning
 then have we, while we view some
 who pretend to be friends to virtue and mo-
 rality, and are strenuous adversaries to the
 doctrines of grace; and others, who pretend
 to be friends to the gospel, are endeavour-
 ing to have it believed that Christians have
 nothing to do with the law! Is not the dis-
 tinction between *speaking* according to this
 rule, and *trusting* to what we do, very easy
 and obvious? May not the believer *obey* the
 law, and yet *trust* in Christ? Nay, ought he
 not to be careful, very careful, to maintain
 good works in his conversation, and yet re-
 nounce them in his justification? Certainly
 he may; and this I boldly pronounce to
 be right: — this is religion! — this is the
 TRUTH! *It becometh us to fulfil the law of the Lord.*
 Permit me to observe farther, That God
 puts, or writes his *gospel*, in the hearts of
 his people, as well as his *law*. So says Paul,
*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and
 in thy heart; that is the word of faith which
 we preach,* Rom: x. 8. But does this vacate,
 annul, or set aside the *gospel*? No, certain-
 ly; and yet if I have nothing to do with
 the law written in the Bible, because it is
 written in my heart, I have the same rea-

sin to say, I have nothing to do with the
 gospel; because it is written in my heart:
 But the real, judicious, experimental Chri-
 stian, hath not so learned Christ. If we have
 experienced the power of the word, we
 shall live (in some measure) according to
 it. The leading and governing principle of
 a man's heart, will be seen in the general
 tenor of his life. *By their fruits ye shall know
 them*; is an invariable rule of judgment.
 If therefore men love the law, they will speak
 well of it, and endeavour, through grace, to
 keep it. While those who entertain no favour-
 able notions of it, will ever be quibbling at,
 and quarrelling with it. The fact in brief is
 this: the man who has experienced the grace
 of God in truth, is a real lover of holiness;
 and desires ever to follow that which is good:
 his greatest burden is sin, and he pants after
 holiness, in heart, lip, and life; and by this
 he does not mean an affected, or pharisaical
 sanctity, in the view of men; but a holi-
 ness proceeding from his union to Christ;
 and an obedience directed to his glory: He
 rejoices that he is *not under the law, but un-
 der grace*; yet does he not sin, *because he is not
 under the law, and that grace may abound*. No,
 he abhors the thought! The true Christian
 is not a libertine nor a legalist; he neither

y Matt. viii. 20.

maketh a Saviour of his works, I nor lives in the neglect of them. Grace has taught him to do all he can for the glory of God; and then, with all humility, to own himself an *unprofitable servant*. Finally, If, first, the law of God has been written in your hearts, you will manifest this in your lives; and let me tell you, with freedom and plainness, it is your duty so to do; *And as many as walk according to this Rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God*. But, of III. We are now to consider the clause that concludes our text, which runs thus: *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. This phrase is expressive of the full sense and design of the covenant of grace; it is an epitome of the gospel, and the glorious and gracious language of it. Here is no mention of *conditions*, or *offers*; nothing of *man's* will or power; the design and declaration of God are absolute. Some tell us, that *faith* and *repentance* are conditions, on man's part, in the covenant of grace, which is a dangerous error. These are *gifts* of God, and blessings of the covenant; were they conditions, they could not be gifts; and being gifts, they cannot be conditions. In the covenant of works, man's obedience was considered as the grand condi-

on of it; but in the covenant of grace, the case is quite otherwise. Were it conditional, it would be of works; but we are assured, that it is of grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed. *I will be their God*, is a precious declaration, and replete with strong consolation for the heirs of promise. It is really joyful news to those who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them. The sense of this gracious declaration is, that God will be all that to his people, and will do all that for them, which is necessary to promote, and perpetuate their comfort here, and their happiness hereafter. It is calculated to establish hope, increase faith, and cherish in the saints the most pleasing views of God and glory. The Lord declares this, to his people, as on the house top; he makes no secret of it; he is not ashamed to be called their God, their Father, and their Portion. Can the believer desire more? If God be his, he has, indeed, a goodly heritage. Hence David says, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee* *. Much to the same purpose is the language of the Church, *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him* ^b.

a Rom. iv. 16. Psal. lxxiii. 25. b Lam. iii. 24.

They shall be my people, is the other part of this divine engagement. Accordingly we find the Lord owning them, asserting, and supporting his claim to, and interest in them, in various places. In the word. He calls them his people, his sons and daughters. And it is said, *The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*. He is their Father, and they are taught to address him under that sacred character, in these solemn words, *Our Father, which art in Heaven*. And, *as a father loveth and pitieth his children; so God loveth and pitieth them*. Moreover, this promise, *they shall be my people*, implies that they shall be brought to the knowledge of him. Hence we read, *that they shall be all taught of the Lord; and that they shall know the Lord*, &c. It also signifies, that they shall be made obedient to the Lord, as their Governor and King. By nature they are disobedient, carnal, foolish, and filled with self-importance; their minds full of enmity and rebellion against God and his ways; but in the great day of his power they are made willing — willing to leave their sins; to be saved by grace, and to serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness all their days. Thus then, they are not only the sons, but

the servants of God, his subjects, as well as his children. They are not only called to a participation of privilege, but to the performance of duty. They are children of God, but then they are obedient children; 'tis their delight to live to God, in a well ordered course of obedience, as well as to live by faith upon him; as their Father and Portion in Christ Jesus. Once more,

This phrase, in which God asserts his claim to his people, may include in it the idea of his presence with them, and care of them. He hath said: *Fear not, ye men of Israel, for I am with you*; and again, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; so that we may boldly say, *the Lord is my helper, nor will I fear what man can do unto me*.

Wherever his people assemble, go or come, he is with them, to bless, guide and keep them. *If they pass through the waters, he will be with them, and through the fire, the flame shall not kindle upon them*. In a word, they are, in the most peculiar and emphatical sense, the Lord's people; they are set apart for himself, that they may show forth his praise;—they are his people now, and shall be his for ever;—his love to them is unchangeable;—he hath provided for them an

e Isa. xli. 10, 13

f Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

inheritance, a kingdom and crowns of glory. Of this great estate there is no alienation or forfeiture; it is settled on the heirs of glory by an irreverfible grant of grace. Their persons and privileges are in the hands of Chrift, and with him they are heirs, and joint heirs of the heavenly inheritance. Nothing in earth, or hell, fhall be able to feperate them from the love of God in Chrift Jefus the Lord*. Happy then, beyond all expreffion or compare, is the people whose God is the Lord. In a word, this precious promise, *I will be their God, and they fhall be my people*, includes all they can want or wifh, to make them holy and happy. Happy in a way, and to a degree, that mocks defcription, and almoft exceeds the power of belief!

Here then we fhall finifh the plan firft laid, and in two or three reflections, fee what may be learned from the whole, and fo clofe.

i. We learn that the whole work of falvation is of God. It took its rife in the everlafting covenant, and was carried on by the incarnation, obedience, atonement, and interceffion of the Mediator; is compleated by the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and

* Rom. viii. 39.

In the several branches of his saving, sanctifying-work on the hearts of his people. The word of God invariably ascribes this salvation to *grace*, and *never to works*. *By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, * &c. Who hath saved, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began*.*

2. We learn, that divine grace secures obedience; and though it precludes works from any share in every part of salvation, it includes them, or makes way for them in our conversation. The Lord's writing his law in their hearts, is that which makes his people willing to obey him, and cannot fail of giving them a relish for religion, and a delight in duty. The business of ministers is to explain, and enforce, the laws and ordinances of God to his people, and call them, in his name, to a chearful discharge of every obligation, and the practice of every good work. Our Lord and his Apostles did this; and we should look up to them as our great patterns in doing the work of the Lord. They who include works in salvation, or exclude them in conversation, have but very imperfect views of their Bi-

* Eph. ii. 8. 19. & 2 Tim. i. 9.

bles, and are far from shewing themselves
~~weakmen that need not be ashamed*~~ They
 should not only unfold the riches of grace,
 preach Christ and him crucified; but like-
 wise inculcate the duties of the law, and
 point out the way of holiness, as well as
 happiness. In a word, Let us never sepa-
 rate grace and works in the life and
 walk of the believer: "Show me thy faith
 without thy works, and I will shew thee my
 faith by my works," is the language of the
 true Christian.

Once more, and we have done.

3. We may hence conclude, that the
 saints are secure. It cannot be supposed,
 much less believed, that they should perish,
 since God is their God, and they are his peo-
 ple. Fears they may have, and falls they
 may meet with, but they shall never fall fi-
 nally. If Heaven above can be measured, or
 the foundations of the earth searched out be-
 neath, the Lord will cast off the seed of Israel's

* I believe in my heart, and declare, before God and
 men, That we ought to perform good works with as much
 care and zeal, as if our whole salvation depended on
 them;—and when done, depend no more on them than if
 they never had been done. If there is a full and finished
 salvation in Christ for helpless sinners (and the Gospel
 abundantly declares there is) it is enough. Works, tho'
 useful and profitable in their place, have no part nor lot in
 that great business;—'Tis not of works, lest any man should
 boast, Eph. ii. 9.

h ver. 37.

old

but

But, as we cannot ascertain the dimensions of the former, we cannot allow the possibility of the latter. Besides, the very promise in the text, *I will be their God*, must mean, that he will be their God for ever. We should offer violence to the joyful import of it, did we give it any other turn, or apply it any other way. In a word, the perfections, the grace, the veracity, and honour of God, stand all engaged to secure his people from falling, and to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. And need we add any thing more, than only to observe, that if God be sincere and faithful (and it were impious to suspect it) his people are safe. They are beloved of the Father; redeemed by the Son; pardoned and justified, and shall be glorified. They are secured in the everlasting covenant, which can never be broken by man, and which God himself will never break*: *What manner of persons then ought they to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?* — I shall conclude the whole, with the

* Paul observes, Gal. iii. 15. *That a man's covenant (or one made by or betwixt men) if it be confirmed, no man dissannulleth or addeth to it*: — Supposing it to be a lease, bond or indenture, or any other lawful contract, if it contains all the requisites of a covenant, it cannot be overthrown. The Apostle argues from the lesser to the greater; and the sense is, That if a man's covenant cannot be broken, surely the covenant of the God of Heaven never can.

words of the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. liv. 101
For the mountains shall depart, and the hills
be removed, but my kindness shall not depart
from thee; neither shall the covenant of my
peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath
mercy on thee. May God command his
 blessing. Amen.

it, did we give it any other way. In a word, the perfect-
 ons, the grace, the veracity, and honour of
 God, find all engaged to secure his people
 from falling, and to preserve them to his
 heavenly kingdom. And need we add any
 thing more, than only to observe, that if
 God be sincere and faithful (and it were im-
 pious to suspect it) his people are safe. They
 are beloved of the Father; redeemed by the
 Son; pardoned and justified, and shall be
 glorified. They are secured in the ever-
 lasting covenant, which can never be broken
 by man; and which God himself will never
 break*: What manner of persons then ought
 they to be; in all holy conversation and godly
 ways? — I shall conclude the whole, with the

E I N I S

* Paul observes, Gal. iii. 12. That a man's covenant for
 one made by or between men, if it be confirmed, no man can
 annul it or make it void: — Supposing it to be a just, good
 or indifferent, or any other lawful contract, it contains all
 the requisites of a covenant, it cannot be overthrown.
 The Apostle argues from the lesser to the greater; and the
 text is, That if a man's covenant cannot be broken, surely
 the covenant of the God of the Jews never can.